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ABSTRACT

This paper explores some alternative ways to think about critical thinking in the study of literature in the elementary grades. In a review of the research, the paper examines several factors that have shaped, or influenced, the trends in the literature curriculum over the years to determine if and how these factors influenced the teaching of critical thinking about children's literature in the elementary grades. Critical reading is defined as the application of critical thinking to the act of reading. Within this framework the paper addresses the following topics: (1) the major factors influencing the trends in the literature curriculum in the elementary grades within the past 30 years; (2) substantive research focusing on critical thinking about children's literature, selection of materials for use in the teaching of critical thinking about literature, especially the critical thinking about literature as art; and (3) literature programs originating from various sources, i.e., children's literature textbooks developed in colleges, or by state departments of education, and commercial children's literature programs. The paper argues that when literature is viewed as an art, students can study literature in its truest sense, that is, engaging in critical thinking when interpreting and evaluating it. Ninety-eight references are attached. (MS)

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Elementary Subjects Center
Series No. 5

CRITICAL THINKING IN THE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

Patricia J. Cianciolo

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

Institute for Research on Teaching

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Michigan State University

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Patricia J. Cianciolo

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Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects was awarded to Michigan State University in 1987 after a nationwide competition. Funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, the Elementary Subjects Center is a major project housed in the Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT). The program focuses on conceptual understanding, higher order thinking, and problem solving in elementary school teaching of mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts. Center researchers are identifying exemplary curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in the teaching of these school subjects; studying these practices to build new hypotheses about how the effectiveness of elementary schools can be improved; testing these hypotheses through school-based research; and making specific recommendations for the improvement of school policies, instructional materials, assessment procedures, and teaching practices. Research questions include, What content should be taught when teaching for conceptual understanding and higher level learning? How do teachers concentrate their teaching to use their limited resources best? and In what ways is good teaching subject matter-specific?

The work is designed to unfold in three phases, beginning with literature review and interview studies designed to elicit and synthesize the points of view of various stakeholders (representatives of the underlying academic disciplines, intellectual leaders and organizations concerned with curriculum and instruction in school subjects, classroom teachers, state- and district-level policymakers) concerning ideal curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in these five content areas at the elementary level. Phase II involves interview and observation methods designed to describe current practice, and in particular, best practice as observed in the classrooms of teachers believed to be outstanding. Phase II also involves analysis of curricula (both widely used curriculum series and distinctive curricula developed with special emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher order applications), as another approach to gathering information about current practices. In Phase III, test models of ideal practice will be developed based on what has been learned and synthesized from the first two phases.

The findings of Center research are published by the IRT in the Elementary Subjects Center Series. Information about the Center is included in the IRT Communication Quarterly (a newsletter for practitioners) and in lists and catalogs of IRT publications. For more information, to receive a list or catalog, or to be placed on the IRT mailing list to receive the newsletter, please write to the Editor, Institute for Research on Teaching, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

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Abstract

The major thrust of this study was to explore the various ways of thinking about critical thinking in the study of literature as an art form. To carry out critical thinking, the individual must inspect, compare, and contrast the relevant facts or opinions, then arrive at some conclusion, making some judgments about the relevant facts or opinions being appraised. Critical reading, which is the application of critical thinking to the act of reading, is an analytical, evaluative kind of reading in which the reader analyzes and judges both the content and the effectiveness of the manner in which the material is presented. This paper examines the major factors that seem to have shaped or influenced the trends in the literature curriculum in the elementary grades within the past 30 years and tries to determine if and how these factors influenced the teaching of critical thinking of children's literature as an art.

Current language arts theory stresses the need to help students learn to express their responses to literature, and when doing so, to go beyond initial superficial responses, that is, to explore and reflect evaluatively upon their responses. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking can be combined around discourse in a social context and focus on the critical evaluations of some aspects of one or more literary selections. When literature is viewed as an art one can study literature in its truest sense, that is, to engage in critical thinking when interpreting and evaluating it. Leading scholars in the study of literature have demonstrated that literary study (especially the study of literature as an art) can and should be taught in the elementary school.

CRITICAL THINKING IN THE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

Patricia J. Cianciolo[1]

This is one of a set of seven reports being prepared for Study 1 of Phase I of the research agenda of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects. Phase I of our work calls for surveying and synthesizing the opinions of various categories of experts concerning the nature of elementary-level instruction in mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts, with particular attention to how teaching for understanding and for higher order thinking and problem solving should be handled within such instruction. Study 1 of Phase I calls for review of the literature in educational psychology, cognitive science, aesthetic education, and related fields on teaching for understanding and for higher order thinking and problem solving, as well as the literature on these topics as they are discussed by curriculum and instruction experts within the context of teaching particular school subjects. The present paper focuses on statements about teaching for understanding and for higher order thinking, especially critical thinking in literature, that have been advanced by the leading scholars and organizations concerned with teaching elementary-level students literature.

The major thrust of this study was to explore the alternative ways of thinking about critical thinking in the study of literature in the elementary grades. To accomplish this it seemed appropriate (a) to examine several factors that seem to have shaped, or at least influenced, the trends in literature curriculum in the elementary grades over the years and (b) to determine if and how these factors influenced the teaching of critical thinking about children's

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literature in the elementary grades. Such an examination will reveal the priorities given to educational goals in general, and more specifically, the roles assigned to the study and use of literature in the elementary grades when these goals were focused on. It will also reveal how English educators defined literature, and more particularly, how they defined literature for children and adolescents. These concepts and definitions of literature would, in turn, influence their understanding of how one responds to literature. One's understanding of how readers respond to literature will influence the approaches to teaching literature, including the teaching of critical thinking about literature.

It is within this framework and logic that the following topics in this paper are addressed:

1. The major factors influencing the trends in the literature curriculum in the elementary grades within the past 30 years: for example, national influences--research projects funded by foundations and the federal government as well as projects and publications sponsored by national professional organizations; international influences such as international conferences; enterprises by scholars and literary critics; and significant research in the study of literature and children's responses to it

2. Substantive research focusing on critical thinking about children's literature, selection of materials for use in the teaching of critical thinking about literature, especially the critical thinking about literature as art

3. Literature programs originating from various sources: college children's literature textbooks, state departments of education, and commercial children's literature programs

Factors Influencing the Teaching of Literature in the Elementary School

National Influences

In 1955, George Winchester Stone of the Modern Language Association, J.N. Hook of the National Council of Teachers of English, and other distinguished scholars and teachers initiated a series of discussions on a national level to study the basic issues in the teaching of English. In 1958, no more than three

months after Russia's Sputnik prompted the American public to focus its attention on the need for excellence in education in modern society, a grant from the Ford Foundation supported the first of four important conferences in New York City for 28 scholars and teachers to study the teaching of English. The Basic Issues Report, submitted by the 28 scholars and teachers who participated in the four conferences, identified 35 issues on the curriculum, the preparation of English teachers, the role of English in American society, and the need for support for basic research. The 17 issues that dealt with the curriculum have mapped the course of English studies since 1958 and affirmed the conferees' belief in "an education in English which is sequential and cumulative in nature, practically and socially useful, and permanently rewarding to the mind and spirit of those who are fortunate enough to get it" (Shugrue, 1968, p. 25). The most important outcome of the report was that it strengthened the concept of the tripod of language, literature, and composition in English as well as the skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, thus enabling teachers in the 1960s to plan a curriculum with clearer goals and fewer peripheral activities. This type of curriculum was a definite departure from that offered up to that point.

Individual schools and school districts across the United States are constantly engaged in curriculum planning and revision--some more systematically than others. No one school or system is likely to influence national curriculum trends or the kinds of textbooks which publishers commission and publish for use in the schools. In fact, significant changes in curriculum tend to reach large numbers of school systems very slowly. If, indeed, sweeping changes occur at the national level at all, they tend to do so because of the thrust from the Office of Education in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Congress, or other legislative bodies.

Project English. In response to the American public's call for greater excellence in education in the late 1950s, the U.S. Congress, by way of the National Defense Education Act, provided federal funds for the improvement of instruction in science, mathematics, and the foreign languages. The National Council of Teachers of English testified before Congress about the great needs in the field of English. This testimony, along with the earlier call for federal support that was issued in The Basic Issues Report, led the U.S. Congress in September 1961 to authorize limited expenditure for the improvement of English instruction through the use of the Office of Education under Public Law 531. The Office of Education funded six Curriculum Study Centers in April 1962 for Project English: Carnegie-Mellon University (then Carnegie Institute of Technology), Hunter College of the City of New York, the University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, the University of Nebraska, and the University of Oregon. By 1963, additional Curriculum Study Centers were established: Florida State University, University of Georgia, Teachers College at Columbia University, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the University of Illinois, and Indiana University. The government's recognition of its obligation to the humanities, reflected in its generous overall funding to support a program to study and improve instruction (especially in literature and language) through basic research, was in large measure responsible for an exhilaration among the members of the English profession which has not been observed since (Shugrue, 1968, p. 36-37).

Project English also sponsored conferences on professional problems related to the teaching of English in the schools. Of special importance was the conference on "Needed Research in the Teaching of English" that was held in May 1962, at the Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh. This conference led directly to the development of curriculum materials by several centers,

detailing methods and techniques for the teaching of language in English classrooms. In the main, the emphases in the curriculum materials prepared by the Project English Curriculum Study Centers were disciplinary, sequential, cumulative, and spiral; the cultivation of excellence in language, literature, and composition typifies their stance.

This perspective on the cultivation of excellence in all students, focusing especially on intellectual development and within a scope and sequence that was sequential, cumulative, spiral, and subject matter-oriented was given support by Jerome S. Bruner's The Process of Education (1960), a popular and influential report of a conference of 35 scientists and educators at Woods Hole. Bruner emphasized that literature (as well as the sciences and social sciences) could be taught with an emphasis upon the intuitive grasp of ideas, fostered especially by inductive teaching and the discovery method, and upon the use of basic ideas because an "intellectual anywhere is the same, whether at the frontier of knowledge or in a third grade classroom" (p. 14). He pointed out that the intellectual development of children is no "clockwork sequence of events"; they respond to influences from the environment, notably the school environment. He argued that instruction need not follow slavishly the natural course of cognitive development of children, but should lead to their intellectual development by providing challenging and usable opportunities which allow them to forge ahead in their own development.

Because Bruner's concept of the spiral curriculum was intellectually exciting, it was used as the framework for developing the sequence called for in The Basic Issues Report. Also because Bruner addressed himself directly to the teaching of English (especially literature) in the schools, his theories had a major impact on the curriculum work done by the Study and Demonstration Centers in Project English (Shugrue, 1968).

New Criticism. The literature curriculum materials developed by the Curriculum Study Centers reflected an Anglo-American movement known as New Criticism, the dominant critical theory and practice used in the study of literature in colleges and universities in the United States from the late 1920s through the mid-1960s. This approach consisted of a close textual reading of the literary work. It required distance and detachment on the part of the reader, to the extent that the text was quite literally disassociated from the author, the reader, historical determinants, genre theory, and other disciplines. The underlying assumption of this theory of literary study is that the literary work is an autonomous, self-sufficient, and self-enclosed verbal entity. Serious opposition to this critical procedure began in the early 1960s with the movement variously called subjective criticism, transactive criticism, or reader-response criticism. This approach to literary criticism tends to stress the reader's subjective encounter with the literary work rather than the study of the objective features of the text (Kasprisin, 1984). The impact of this opposition movement in literary criticism is apparent in the recommendations which emanated from the 1966 Dartmouth Conference which will be discussed later in this paper.

Sequence in the study of literature. At the 1963 Modern Language Association annual meeting and subsequently in the article "Elementary Teaching and Elementary Scholarship," Northrop Frye (1964b) defended the idea of sequence in the study of literature. He said that literature should be treated as a progressive and systematic study which would furnish the students with something of tangible and permanent value. He emphasized that poetry be at the center of all literary training and that prose be peripheral in the study of literature. He disallowed any form of utilitarian English (Shugrue, 1968). Curriculum planners, especially those associated with the Project English Curriculum Study

Centers, quite unanimously rejected Frye's emphasis on poetry in the literature program. However, his belief that a sequence in the study of literature could be developed, with the emphasis on teaching comedy and romance in the early years and tragedy and irony later, provided a framework for a structured English curriculum that typified the materials developed by Project English Curriculum Study Centers.

The call for structure and continuity in English curricular design in The Basic Issues Report, Bruner, and Frye applied to every child at all levels of the school, grades K-12. The problems and the needs of children of different cultural, social, economic, and linguistic backgrounds were not addressed. Although the National Council of Teachers of English did address some of the problems of educating disadvantaged children in some of their publications (e.g., Culturally Different Youth in Large Cities and Language Programs for the Disadvantaged) and in their 1965 Task Force on Teaching English to the Disadvantaged, the Council continued to support the development of curricula involving structure and continuity throughout the elementary and secondary school years (Shugrue, 1968).

Most of the Project English Curriculum Study Centers focused on post-elementary programs and developed programs in language, literature, and composition for college-bound students as well as for the able students and for the educationally disadvantaged in junior and senior high schools. For example, the units developed by the Center at Purdue University started with Grade 7 "since it is here that English begins to be taught as a subject, the lower grades being differently organized" (Bryan, Schneider, & Jackson, 1965, p. 1). The University of Nebraska however, did begin to develop a total English curriculum for grades K-13. While all of the Curriculum Study Centers integrated literature, language, and composition (oral and/or written) in some way, they

all still adhered faithfully to the principles of subject discipline structure and planned sequence. A few of the opus units developed by some of the Centers are described below.

Project English at the University of Nebraska Curriculum Study Center developed a total curriculum for grades K-13, emphasizing composition and rhetoric, but weaving in strands of literature and language. More specifically, their program began with the study of children's literature of "a high order." The children studied the language listed in their literature units and were expected to come to understand it by carefully analyzing selected samples of it or by playing language games designed to provide clues concerning how language operates as a system. In the composition program, the students were asked to write in a series of literary modes and to experiment and manipulate the linguistic forms derived from the literature they studied. This literature study included myths, comedies, romances, fables, satires, and biographies.

Western Reserve University developed a literature unit on characterization for average eighth-grade students. The unit, consisting of seven lessons, incorporated the usual English skills but emphasized reading and composition. The lessons in this unit addressed concepts which were developed further in other units or had been previously studied. For example, a lesson on determinants of character provided the basis for units on "The Outcast and Culture" prepared for Grade 9; the lesson on aspects of characterization was based on the units entitled "Courage and Justice" in Grade 7.

The Northwestern University Project English Curriculum Study Center prepared three units comprising a year's work in composition for fourth graders in a Chicago inner-city school. These units emphasized process in the art of writing and used literature as an integral and functional part of the writing exercises; that is, literature served as a model, giving the children a point of

reference; the models were discussed during all of the stages in the total writing process. The children listened to stories, read them, interpreted them (via creative dramatizations, role playing, etc.), and discussed them. Only then did they organize their own ideas and write.

Commercially published units. The impact of the Project English Curriculum Study Centers on the elementary and secondary schools in the United States can be seen to a limited extent in resulting commercial publications. For example, distinctive literature units were produced in 1966 by The Gateway English Program which resulted from Hunter College's Curriculum Study Center. Edited by Marjorie Smiley, this program, was addressed to students in grades eight and nine. It was a comprehensive literature and language arts program aimed at involving disadvantaged adolescents in meaningful reading experiences through the reading of selections relevant to their problems. The literature the students read was estimated to be at a reading level of grades five through seven. Even though this program was developed especially for use with urban, disadvantaged adolescents, it was received enthusiastically by adolescents from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds (Shugrue, 1968). The composition lessons prepared by the Center at Northwestern were also published commercially.

In addition to being commercially published, representative units from four centers were made available to members of the Modern Language Association and the National Council of Teachers of English. Numerous sectional meetings at the national conferences of these two professional organizations were devoted to the sharing of the curriculum materials developed by some of the Project English Curriculum Study Centers. Although most of the curriculum materials were not made accessible to the profession, some of them were. Thus, dissemination did occur on the national level, minimal as it actually was. The curriculum materials developed and the seminars and institutes held on the

university campuses with Project English Curriculum Study Centers and Demonstration Centers reveal what leading scholars of literature study and English education thought desirable regarding educational objectives in these academic areas in Grades K-12, learning theories, and instructional methods and materials and also reflect their knowledge of child development.

NDEA institutes. Beginning in 1965 and lasting through 1968, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was expanded to make Title XI funds available for summer institutes for the retraining of teachers of English and reading. From 1958-1965, the NDEA provided federal funds only for summer institutes for the retraining of teachers of science, mathematics, and foreign languages. During the summer of 1966 (June 22, 1966, to August 3, 1966) an NDEA Institute on "The Study of Children's Literature and Its Use to Foster the Development of Discriminating Reading Skills and Attitudes in Grades 4-9" was held at Michigan State University under the leadership of Patricia Cianciolo. In late Fall of 1965, Cianciolo was awarded a grant to plan and support an institute to be held during the Summer of 1966. Thirty-five participants attended from 18 states, Puerto Rico, and the Department of Defense Dependent Schools in Japan and represented a wide variety of professional positions and responsibilities in elementary schools.

The main purpose of this institute was to provide a means by which professional elementary personnel (Grades 4-9) could acquire the necessary knowledge and skills: (a) to promote a further interest in the reading of literature by elementary school students, and (b) to help elementary school students to become discriminating (critical and appreciative) readers. This institute was the only NDEA institute that summer to focus on the teaching of discriminating reading and on children's literature. The Arts of Language (Olson, 1966) was the official report of a conference held at the University of Nebraska from

February 26, 1966, through March 1, 1966, for 58 distinguished professors and teachers, representing a variety of disciplines, who debated the issues involved in the retraining of teachers of grades one through six as scholars and teachers of English language and its resources. In this publication Paul Olson called for more NDEA institutes for elementary teachers of English/Language Arts, noting that the elementary curriculum was rapidly changing and that research was clearly needed in the area of inservice curriculum for teachers in the elementary grades.

Triple T programs. In 1967, the Office of Education changed its financial support and interest from discipline-oriented programs led by subject matter specialists (such as Project English and the NDEA institutes in English/Reading) to Conferences for Teachers of Trainers of Teachers (Triple-T). These conferences were sponsored by the Education Profession Development Act and developed cooperatively by local school districts and colleges. The guidelines for the Triple-T programs emphasized the discussion of the English curriculums, the new directions in English, the urgent problems unique to schools and the disadvantaged throughout the United States, and the pre- and inservice education of teachers of English in classrooms at every level. Although the planning for the Triple-T programs began in 1967, the implementation of the programs did not begin nationwide until 1969. (Remnants of the Triple-T program offered at Michigan State University remain in the Academic Learning Program, which is one of five alternative programs in undergraduate teacher education at MSU.)

The war in Vietnam soon led to severe cuts in funding for educational research and retraining of teachers. Thus, federal funding for efforts by the English/Language Arts scholarly community, such as in Project English, the NDEA Institutes in Reading/English, and Teachers of Trainers of Teachers programs, became a thing of the past.

International Influences

Dartmouth Conference. By the mid-1960s, the time was ripe for the formation of an international movement for the teaching of English. It began through informal contacts of English scholars involved in individual enterprises who recognized the value of what was occurring elsewhere in the world and the need to explore the potentialities for their own situations. As a result of the initiative of the Canadian Council of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers (United States), the National Association of the Teaching of English (United Kingdom), and the Modern Language Association (United States), a conference was held at Dartmouth College in 1966 to provide a forum for a thorough investigation of the perspectives and practices of teaching English that were of mutual interest and concern. It was supported by a grant from the Carnegie Foundation of New York. (The conference is referred to in the professional literature by assorted names: The Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English, the Dartmouth Conference, the Dartmouth Seminar, as well as the First International Conference.)

The majority of the participants from both sides of the Atlantic denounced the position that the study of English, especially literature, should have a rigid scope and sequence from grade to grade. Although they did see the need for some continuity in the English program, in general and literature programs in particular, they stressed that it is a humane subject. In this context, they raised challenging questions about the work of the Curriculum Study Centers in Project English and called for the study and testing of sequential curriculums. The participants from the United Kingdom tended to base their position on the psychological development of children; the participants from the United States cited concerns about subject matter content, objectives, and principles of knowledge. Participants from both sides of the Atlantic agreed that

English, however defined, is first of all an experience with language, both written and oral, that includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Some of their recommendations pertaining specifically to literature are cited below.

- The need for the "teachers of literature to select books embodying diverse visions of life, beliefs, and values, and then question, discuss, and explore them with the students; this would lead to an awareness of moral complexity, ambiguity, and paradox" (Muller, 1967, p. 93) that one finds in life. They did wonder whether most school boards and parents would approve of children dealing with such complexity and ambiguity.

- The need to provide "rich literary experiences in the educative process and the importance of teachers of English restudying particular selections to determine their appropriateness for readers at different levels." (Markwardt, 1967, p. 104)

- "The need to negate the limiting, often stultifying, impact of examination patterns which direct attention of both teachers and pupils to aspects of literature which are at best superficial and are frequently misleading. . . .

- "The compelling urgency of improving the conditions under which English is taught in the schools: the need for more books and libraries, for better equipment, for reasonable class size, for a classroom environment which will make good teaching possible. . . .

- "The importance for teachers of English at all levels to inform themselves about the results of pertinent scholarship and research so that their classroom approaches in the study and use of literature may be guided accordingly. . . .

- "The need for radical reform in programs of teacher education at both the preservice and inservice levels." (Markwardt, 1967, p. 105)

In an article entitled "Trends in Teaching Literature" Arthur Eastman (1967) said that two trends were foreshadowed at the Dartmouth Conference: the teaching of literature as an engaging with life and the teaching of literature through instrumentalities of linguistics. The reference to life is not purely illustrative. It affirms the affective experience with literature which a significant majority of the conference participants acknowledged and tended to favor. This inclination toward a subjective response to literature, favoring the individual and personal response rather than the objective and detached

response, is apparent in the reminders conference participants made to one another that the teacher should not always ask the pupils to discuss--or even to share in other ways--their responses to literature. There are some occasions, they said, when the best comment about the power of a literary selection rests in the silence of reflection over what moved them; it may involve too big an investment of them for any of them in the group to want to talk about their particularized work and to repeated sensitive readings. None of the participants mentioned directly the need for teachers to respect the students' right to privacy. They did say that sharing personal responses should be restrained and thoughtful and should lead back to the particular work rather than focus on and stop with the students and their subjective associations in response to the work.

The recommendations made by the Dartmouth Conference participants probably had little immediate or direct widespread effect on classroom teachers. Nonetheless, it did produce a number of highly praised and often discussed documents that have eventually affected teacher education courses in the teaching of English/Language Arts and curriculum planners and thus, eventually, teachers. Of significance are the following publications:

-Dixon, John. Growth Through English. Reading, England: National Association for the Teaching of English, 1967.

-Barnes, Douglas. Drama in the English Classroom. Champaign, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968.

-Moffett, James. The Universe of Discourse. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.

-Muller, Herbert. The Uses of English. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967.

-Olson, Paul A. The Uses of Myth. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968.

The most notable effect of the publications cited above on the study and use of literature in elementary school curriculum can be seen during the late

1960s when literature teachers encouraged their students to talk about their responses to literature, and when the use of improvisational drama and readers' theatre in the literature program became more widespread. The Dartmouth Conference and these resulting publications added to the already keen interest in researching the affective and cognitive domains in children's response to literature and the implications of these research findings for the study and use of literature in the elementary school classrooms.

International conference. An International Steering Committee was established shortly after the Dartmouth Conference to consolidate the gains of the Dartmouth Conference and to promote exchange among the member associations as well as with the teachers of English in the countries represented. Meetings were held by the International Steering Committee in York, England, in 1970 and in Sydney, Australia, in 1980. Under the guidance of the Steering Committee Executive Board, the International Federation for the Teaching of English (IFTE) was organized in 1983 in Montreal, Canada. Members from New Zealand, Nigeria, the People's Republic of China, Singapore, South Africa, and Thailand were added to the Federation. When forming the International Federation of Teachers of English the Executive Board of the International Steering Committee suggested that the IFTE meetings be held as preconferences immediately preceding the national meetings of the member organizations. The first such preconference sponsored under the IFTE name, was an invitational seminar held on November 11-14, 1984 at Michigan State University under the leadership of Stephen Tchudi, then president of the National Council of Teachers of English. It should be noted that at least two important publications resulted from the international conferences: English in the Eighties (Eagleson, 1982) and Language, School and Society (Tchudi, 1985).

Both books are proceedings of the international conferences on the teaching of English and reflect the thinking of the most influential English curriculum scholars in English-speaking countries of this era. The Eagleson book contains the papers presented at the International Steering Committee in Sydney, Australia, in 1980. The Tchudi book consists of two parts, namely the keynote addresses that were presented at the conference in East Lansing, Michigan, in 1984 and which offered some international perspectives on language, schooling, and society and the recommendations of the study groups which focused on the global imperative for literacy and learning in English. The papers reprinted in each of these publications address varied aspects of the teaching of English. However, those addressed to the study of literature and critical thinking in relation to literature are notably sparse. Nonetheless, one will find throughout each book any number of implications for the role that literature study plays in language development, thinking, and learning in general.

Conferences such as these facilitate the exchange of ideas and the formation of strong personal links which help to promote the continuing process of interchange and collaboration away from formal meetings. They also enable each participant to bring additional perspectives to what is being done in his/her own country or region. They provide contact with others from different traditions and environments and, thereby, encourage the separatism of convention from principle, and perhaps even the discovery of new ideas and the correction or refinement of existing conventions (Eagleson, 1982, p. ix).

Bullock Report. Another impact of the international networking of English/Language Arts scholars was the sharing of major nationwide studies and resulting documents. A report of the English governments' Committee of Inquiry Into Reading and the Uses of English was chaired by Sir Alan Bullock (1975) and

published under the title A Language for Life: Report of the Secretary of State for Education and Science. (It is known also as the Bullock Report among English scholars in most English-speaking countries.) The recommendations for each area of language were elaborate and numerous; they were addressed to educators of all children--disadvantaged children as well as middle class and privileged children. Some of their major recommendations for reading, literature, and higher order thinking skills when reading literature are identified below.

- -Priority should be given to introducing children to books in preschool years to show them some of the pleasures and purposes of reading. Pupils should be taught how to become active interrogators of the text rather than passive receivers of words.
- -Pupils need to explore inferences in a wide range of materials, not only textbooks but a whole range of materials.
- -Pupils should learn to assess the development of their own reading skills.
- -Whatever else pupils take away from their experiences with literature, they should have learned to consider it as a source of pleasure and something that will continue to be part of their lives.

The Bullock Report was widely circulated among English scholars in the United States and in other English-speaking counties, especially those now involved with the International Federation of Teachers of English. It was critiqued and the implications of its recommendations were discussed at numerous sessions of the National Council of Teachers of English. Thus, it was instrumental in bringing to the fore the concerns and problems facing teachers of English in the 1970s and it revealed some of the ideas and educational goals and practices that were held by leading English scholars in that era.

One can see in the recommendations of the Bullock Report the influences of the Dartmouth Conference as well as the impact of the open classroom experiences in England and to a limited extent in the United States. This is seen specifically in their (Bullock, 1975) obvious concern for all aspects of English Education, for example, language (especially speaking and writing) and

literature, and the need to proceed from each individual learner (often in an interactive activity) rather than from the teacher in a unidirectional fashion.

Other Factors Influencing Literature Study

In the later 30s and early 40s, as the United States and European countries emerged from an economic depression and entered World War II, practicality and immediacy were uppermost in people's minds; English teachers were no exception in this respect. English teachers and curriculum planners, in general, did not see literature as making much of a contribution to the existing aims of education. In the main, writers of textbooks on curriculum assigned to literature a vague place in the aesthetic development of the student or viewed literature as "a kind of recreational dessert capping the solid nutrient of the really important components of the curriculum" (Burton, 1968, p. 61). At this time, literature study as such was never really part of the elementary schools and literally disappeared in many junior high schools and in some senior high schools, as core programs or common learnings became widespread. In this atmosphere literature appeared only when ingenious teachers could "smuggle" it into units on home and family problems, and so on (Burton, 1968, p. 61).

As a result of a changing view of teaching and learning in the 1950s, teachers in their classrooms were tackling the task of working out new methods of teaching and learning, for the new model of education demanded a move from teaching as an unidirectional, teacher and society imposed process to an interactive and child-centered view. In this era, literature was viewed as a precious object or a means through which students could be offered as a moral guide to life or a therapeutic treatment (bibliotherapy). There seemed to be a preoccupation with theme or message rather than with literature (fiction) as an art form consisting of an artful interrelationship and interdependence of

specific elements, for example, plot, characterization, setting, mood, style, and theme. It was quite common in professional journal articles in the 1950s to see reference made to such slogans as "Literature as Equipment for Living" or "Literature and the Heightened Mind." In actual fact, as titillating as these slogans appeared, literature study (and most of the literature itself that was written during this era) was not equipment for living nor for heightening minds (Burton 1968).

Time lag between theory and practice. The time lag that usually exists between theoretical discussions of curricula in professional journals and to their publication and actual practice in the classroom is huge. This time lag in the study of literature is very obvious, as it is with other aspects of the English Language Arts (perhaps less, however, in the teaching writing in the 1980s). In large measure this time lag among teachers of literature may be due to their disinclination: (a) to read widely and regularly, curriculum and pedagogical publications in which research and educational psychology and recent classroom experiences call for change, (b) to share new knowledge and experiences with their colleagues, and/or (c) to experiment and try out new ideas in their own classrooms. It may be due also, to the fact that the preservice and inservice English/Language Arts subject matter and methods courses do not study diverse teaching methods, instructional materials, or the kinds of specific learning experiences that would actually help students realize these competencies. One cannot ignore the vulnerability of administrators and classroom teachers to local community mores and educational ideals. Educators are not generally known for their inclination to initiate educational reforms nor are they likely to attempt to overcome strong counterattacks against change if an influential and/or vocal group in a community resists proposed changes (Watson, 1974).

These are only a few of the many reasons one finds that, all too often, current, academic thought is segregated from classroom practices in the study of literature and language. It was not until the very late 1960s, 30 years after it appeared as a major movement, that even a small number of elementary schools responded to the influence of the New Criticism. This resulted in treating literature as a discipline and an emphasis on close reading of individual literary selections; students therefore were expected to examine literary selections meticulously. Not many elementary school teachers were ever exposed to Northrop Frye's ideas about teaching literature, to the tenets underlying the New Criticism, or to the Project English Curriculum Study Center materials in their preservice or inservice study.

Not many elementary or middle school teachers became especially knowledgeable about literature as art or literary criticism which called for the close reading and the explication of a text rather than an ornamented form of sociology, philosophy, or ethics. Thus, approaching the study of literature as an art or textual analysis in terms of form was seldom practiced in the elementary school up to grade six. One might see it in a few seventh- or eighth-grade classrooms in elementary schools ending with grade eight or in a few middle school or junior high school classrooms. In the main, however elementary school teachers of this era tended to favor an approach to literature that was intended to get the child involved or engaged, intellectually and emotionally (especially the latter). This latter approach, which focuses on literature as a humanity rather than as an art, is quite in keeping with the thrust of the Dartmouth Conference recommendations.

Existential stance in the 60s and 70s. Also, during the late 1960s and and through the 1970s an existentialist stance was quite pervasive among people in the United States (especially those in the 18-30 age range), and many people

felt the need for (in fact, demanded) greater permissiveness and flexibility. Teachers and librarians reflected this need for greater permissiveness and flexibility in school libraries and classrooms. Thus they were quite willing to include in their selection and use literary works of high literary quality as well as those that were, at best, of mediocre literary quality. Regardless of their quality, literary selections were used in the study of literature as an art or as a model for writing, for purposes of bibliotherapy, or extending or enriching the social studies curriculum, and so forth.

Literature was indeed found in many elementary school classrooms and varied approaches to the study and use of literature were evident, but there were few restrictions on the kinds of books and other reading materials placed in libraries and classrooms. On one hand, a large number of people--especially those under 30--tended to rebel against any standardization or norms for guiding one's valuing (including the evaluation of literature), since they tended to perceive that any norms or criteria would inhibit their critical evaluation. On the other hand, literal acceptance of the printed word--for the facts it offered, the themes it put forth, the behavior it depicted, was seldom discouraged or even questioned by a large number of people, especially those over 30. Teachers over age 30 were less likely to teach children to be critical or thoughtful about their reading of literature. This was an era in which traditions were rejected and scoffed at, novelists were encouraged to seek their own form, their own style, and to use their own language.

Much of the literature published in the 1970s was characterized by a refreshing and expansive range of innovation in content as well as technique, but most of the writers of this period restated rather than abandoned the cultural traditions. Literature for children still depicted protagonists (a) enjoying fulfillment in their search for adventure, their wishes, dreams, or quests,

and (b) rising above obstacles by using their own admirable human talents or some fortunate circumstance or magical invention. However, a result of this desire on the part of literary artists to break away from traditional forms and create new ones, three iconoclastic and innovative literary forms did appear in the children's literature mainstream of the late 1960s and the 1970s. These iconoclastic literary forms, found quite widely in the juvenile novels published during this era are: the existentialist or activist novel, the impressionist novel, and the antirealistic or surrealistic novel (Cianciolo, 1977).

Three types of juvenile novels. The existentialist or activist novel reflected a postwar concern with the individual self and an acceptance of existentialism as a philosophy of life. In existentialist fiction the author simply presents "X" number of days in the life of the protagonist. The characters do not move from a carefully specified beginning, through a climactic situation, to a final outcome as they do in the traditional fictional form. Seldom is there a very deliberate or conclusive moment of stoppage. Occasionally an author does permit the character to achieve a modest and tentative plan in his/her search for a worthwhile and fulfilling life. Most frequently, however, the existentialist fiction consists of portraying the temporary results of the encounters between the protagonist and his random experiences. Examples of existentialist fiction are found in Slake's Limbo by Felice Homan (published by Scribner, 1974) and The Man in the Box by Lois Mary Dunn (published by McGraw Hill, 1968).

The impressionist novel enables the reader to see things through the eyes of one of the characters and at that point in time, quite like an impressionist painting. Thus the interpretation of the action is a one-sided impression because it is restricted to the disposition and perspective of the one person rather than encompassing the author's omniscient viewpoint. The impressionist

novel is usually a first-person account. Therefore, one often finds extensive use of informal language, use of dialect, and some profanity--not the typical language of literature that tends to be more polished. Examples of the impressionist novels include Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret by Judy Blume (published by Bradbury, 1970) and A Hero Ain't Nothing but a Sandwich by Alice Childress (published by Coward, McCann, 1973).

The antirealistic or surrealist novels are novels of fantasy, illogicality, and/or absurdity that may be viewed as the fictional counterpart of abstract or surrealist painting. This kind of fiction presents a dreamlife of our civilization. Through them we glimpse the wishes and nightmares, the pleasant and the ugly vision of an era or our subconscious self. Surrealistic literature reflected the unrest in the 1960s and 1970s caused by different and contradictory values and/or the unreconciled beliefs and attitudes with which society was struggling. No matter how zany these literary pieces appeared, they were in reality social criticism, being commentaries on the realities and ugliness of the human condition. The surrealist fiction writer uses the grotesquely heightened and distorted image of the world as shock therapy, hoping that this will challenge the readers to make sense out of what appears as a senseless action. Theoretically, this technique would make the reader more aware of the problems of the modern world and desire to rectify the existing situation. Examples of the surrealist novel are found in I Can Hear You Whisper by Paul Zindel (published by Harper and Row, 1971) and Figgs and Phantoms by Ellen Raskin (published by Dutton, 1974).

Curriculum changes in the 70s. In what amounts to a sketchy, compendious review of contemporary thinking about literature study in Grades K-12 in the United States, Ken Donelson (1977) stated in the National Society for The Study of Education yearbook entitled The Teaching of English, that critics of

education in the 1960s and 1970s (i.e. John Holt, George Deanison, Jonathan Kozol, Charles E. Silberman, Dan Fader, and Neil Postman) were influential in leading educators to reexamine the purposes and aims of the literature curriculum so they would move toward student-centered and response-oriented approaches to teaching (Squire, 1977). Donelson identified some other major factors that influenced literature curriculum changes in the 1970s. These included the proliferation of paperback books, literary themes on film and television, censorship, and response centered approach to the study of literature (Donelson, 1977). These factors deserve further comment and are discussed below.

The proliferation of paperback books for juveniles as well as paperback book clubs in the schools greatly expanded and broadened the literature programs. They were often used to supplement or even supplant the basic literature anthologies and basal reading textbooks.

The media attracted attention to literature by producing quality *literature programs on film and television*, and thus motivating publishers to make these literature selections readily available in hardback and paperback editions. It should be noted that there was enough substantive research done by publishers' marketing personnel and library science professors to demonstrate that, having seen stories dramatized in the media, children will be motivated to read the book version of a novel, to read another book by the same author, or to read another book on the same theme, topic, or genre. National television companies often hired children's literature professors, and school and public librarians who worked with children, to participate in the selection and production of these stories based on literary selections and to prepare prescreening and postscreening suggestions for the television interpretation of each book.

For example, in the 1970s (1973-1979) seven literature presentations of juvenile novels and short stories aired on ABC-TV's "Afternoon Specials" and 36 sound filmstrips of children's literature selections for McGraw-Hill Films were produced. These media interpretations of literary themes served as financial assets for commercial television and publishers. In the late 1980s not only do they continue to be very much a part of the commercial television networks' programming fare, but they also make up a healthy percentage of the video cassette offerings that are available for VCR owners to purchase or rent for viewing in the privacy of their homes at their leisure. In addition, school and public librarians and teachers have noted the impact that these literary themes on film and television have had on promoting the habit of reading. Television programs such as "Reading Rainbow" (sponsored jointly by the American Library Association, the Kellogg Foundation, and the Public Broadcasting System) and "Wonder Works" continue to bring quality literature by way of film and television to the children of the late 1980s.

Censorship has always been a part of the lives of literature teachers, but in this era the frequency and seriousness of censorship incidents intensified when educators attempted to accommodate (a) the findings brought to light in the research done in the 1960s and 1970s on reading interests and response to literature, (b) the recommendations that came from the Dartmouth Conference and the Bullock Report, and (c) the pressure from curriculum and teacher education organizations to individualize instruction. Thus, they resorted to individual literary selections rather than literature anthologies and basal reading textbooks in the elementary and secondary schools. The document prepared and published jointly by the National Council of Teachers of English and the American Library Association entitled "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Book" (published in The Student's Right to Read--Donelson, 1972), was an

obvious reaction to this increase in censorship. Although more and more schools started centralized libraries in the 1960s and 1970s they were seldom staffed with certified librarians. Books were selected by library aides or interested parents and other volunteers from the community. Few, if any of these nonprofessionals had knowledge of how to select quality literature that would be of interest to children and also be accepted (or at least tolerated) by the community at large. Nor did they realize that a written book selection policy statement, approved by the members of their school board, would help to stave off instances of censorship.

The Dartmouth Conference participants and the writers of the Bullock Report encouraged literature teachers in the elementary and middle school to implement *the response-centered approach to the study of literature* with a fair degree of confidence. A number of beacons seemed to have influenced the position that the Dartmouth Conference participants and the writers of the Bullock Report took concerning the approach to literature study in the schools. These will be discussed below as will some of the other voices that addressed the issues related to response to literature in the late 1970s and 1980s and subsequently changed the focus and perspectives that curriculum makers and literary critics subscribed to regarding the study of literature.

I.A. Richards: I.A. Richards' Practical Criticism (1929) focused on the emotional response of the reader. A psychologist and semanticist, Richards was interested primarily in the therapeutic effects of poetry, but his theory of response was subsequently applied to all literary genre. According to Richards, the "goodness" or "badness" of a selection was determined by one's momentary psychic needs. He did not recognize a world of aesthetic values. Instead he downplayed the importance of wholeness and multiple meaning of a literary work of art. In theory, if not in actual practice, the theory detailed in Practical Criticism would result in a complete anarchy of values. There seems to be

little doubt that many of the recent American literary critics associated with the New Criticism school of literary response derive from Richards. Most noteworthy among the New Critics is David Bleich (1978) whose book Subjective Criticism became a guidebook, if not the Bible, for students of language acquisition, the act of reading, and literary interpretation during the early 1980s.

Louise Rosenblatt: Although Louise Rosenblatt's Literature as Exploration (1968) presented a model for the relationship between the reader and the text of a literary selection, she postulated relevance to all the arts. She claimed that her transactional theory was not limited to the aesthetic in literature but was applicable to aesthetic education in general. The transactional process of responding to literature consists of the efferent and the aesthetic. In the efferent stance, the reader focuses attention predominantly on what is obtained after the reading: "Given the efferent stance, meaning emerges from an abstracting out and analytic structuring of the ideas, information, directions, conclusions to be retained, used or acted on after the reading event" (p. 124).

The aesthetic stance designates an attitude of readiness to focus attention on what is being lived through in relation to the text during the reading event. Inner tensions, sensations, feelings, and associations accompanying images and variations may color imagined scenes, actions, and characters. This lived-through work is what the reader responds to as it is created during the transaction. Only later is it reflected on, interpreted, evaluated, analyzed, and criticized in the efferent stance. Any text can be read efferently or aesthetically. If the purpose is to classify the metaphors or analyze the syntax or even to give a literal paraphrase, attention would have to be withdrawn from the inner experience in order to place in the center of attention the mainly public aspects of meaning. This kind of purpose when reading requires the efferent stance (Rosenblatt, 1986).

Curriculum and classroom methods should be evaluated in terms of whether they foster or impede an initial aesthetic transaction and on whether they help students to savor and deepen the lived-through experience, to recapture and reflect on it, and to organize their sense of it. In light of such awareness, students can discover how the new experience--the evoked literary work--relates both to the text and to their earlier experience and assumptions; they can become self-critical and hence grow in capacity to evoke and to criticize. Centered on personal transaction the traditional concerns--the validity of interpretation, criteria for evaluation, historical perspective--can then provide the framework for thinking about literary works of art (Rosenblatt, 1986).

Roman Ingarden: During his tenure at Lvov University in Poland, philosopher Roman Ingarden published his companion pieces in aesthetics, The Literary Work of Art (1965/1973b), in which he addressed the question, How is the object of cognition (the literary work of art) structured, and how does it exist? and The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art (1968/1973a) in which he addressed the following questions: What process or processes lead to the cognition of the literary work of art? What are the possible ways of cognizing it? and What results can we expect of this cognition? In each book, Ingarden attempted to establish certain fundamental principles for dealing with literature as an object of knowledge before one could even begin to discuss the proper methodology of literary studies. It is on the basis of Ingarden's answers to these two basic questions that Bruce Miller (1980) addressed the methodology of literary studies in Teaching the Art of Literature, one of the most scholarly and insightful works of this kind.

Wolfgang Iser: Wolfgang Iser (1916/1978) wrote The Act of Reading in which he offers a systematic framework for assessing the communicatory function of a literary text within the context from which it arises. It has bearing on

the stance one takes with regard to the reading process, aesthetic theory, and literary criticism. Iser emphasized that an understanding of what happens during the reading process is basic to the development of a theory of aesthetic response, because reading sets in motion a whole chain of activities that depend on both the text and on the exercise of certain human faculties. Iser analyzes aesthetic response in terms of a dialectic relationship between the text, reader, and their interaction. It is called aesthetic response because, although it is brought about by the text, it brings into play the imaginative and perceptive facilities of the readers in order to make them adjust and even differentiate their own focuses. This perspective implies that the literary selection is to be approached from a theory of aesthetic response and not from a theory of the aesthetics and reception. Neither Iser's theory nor Ingarden's theory have undergone empirical tests to prove their validity. They were both influential in helping literary scholars of literature and English educators devise a framework for mapping out and guiding empirical studies on reader response.

Response to literature. Innumerable research studies on children's responses to literature were conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of them were provoked by the theories of literary criticism and response defined in the publications that were written by the scholars identified above. The impact of these theories can be seen in the papers that are presented biennially at the symposia of the International Research Society for Children's Literature, the proceedings of which are usually published. Of particular significance is the symposium held in England at the University of Exeter, September 9-12, 1978, on "Responses to Children's Literature." The proceedings of this symposium were published in a book with the same title and edited by Geoff Fox and Graham Hammond (1980).

Reporting on their research concerning response to literature were scholars such as Stuart Amor, Rhonda Bunbury, Patricia Cianciolo, Joseph Schwarcz, Michael Benton, and others. Each of these researchers clearly demonstrated the fact that the recognition of the cognitive element does not deny the importance of the emotional side of the aesthetic experience, rather it denies the value of distinction. Our cognition and our emotions are intrinsically related in aesthetic responses. The ways we understand a story (or a painting, a piece of sculpture, or a musical selection) influence our feelings and our feelings guide our understanding of it. To a large extent, cognition gives shape to emotions and for this reason it is a justified focus for analyzing and critiquing a literary work of art.

The habitual mode of most readers' response to literature (both children and adults) invariably consists of an unbalanced combination of thought and emotion, either overintellectualizing or oversentimentalizing. In actual fact, when teaching critical thinking about literature it is crucial to recognize the value and inevitability of both cognitive and emotional responses to literature. Both are intricately related in aesthetic response and should be encouraged rather than squelched in any literature program, including one focusing on the critical thinking of literature (Bogdan, 1986).

Some of the research in aesthetic education and in the scholarly discussions by literary critics suggest that there are three developmental levels in the dialectical or transactional response to literature as an art. The three levels are defined as follows: At Level I, the readers do not distinguish self from others even though they are socially oriented. They are aware of what appears to them and not what appears to others; they are subject only to their pleasures, pains, and other perceptions. From this beginning they construct an understanding of the world of literature as art. They do this by gradually

becoming aware of learning the language others use when talking about literature and sharing their admirations. At this level they are able to appreciate the fine use of language, the skills of creating a literary selection, the interest of the topic; they take the norms involved for granted as if they were facts, they do not distinguish the aesthetic from other kinds of experience.

At Level II, readers are more fully members of their society, sharing its values, grasping its intentions. Cognitively they can take the point of view of individual others and then of society as a whole. They can understand literature as art as the expression of subjectivity, appreciate the expressions of a wide range of difficult emotions--the violent, the tragic. Later they will be able to find meaning in the formal aspects of literature, in style, genre, and social and historical context. They are aware of their own subjectivity, understand that they interpret what they read, distinguish fact from values, and find literary criticism helpful.

Level III, which is the autonomous level, is comparable to Bruner's level of "courageous taste"; it is quite aptly called the "post-conventional level." The basic point here is that readers make judgments more in light of good reasons and less in terms of socially current opinions. They criticize (by use of reason) the values and categories of their society and their own stereotypes and habits. In this way they can adequately grasp qualities of the literary work. At the same time they can raise questions about both their own and the values of the literary work. This is individual independence of thought, but it is not the less social for that. The criticism of established values--in society as well as in the literary world-- has the implicit goal of improving them, of reaching for an unachieved but possible consensus based on reason (Parsons, 1986).

This approach to the study of one's response to literature tends to focus on the cognitive, but it honors the necessity for the subjective and affective aspects of response. It seems to be in harmony with the current emphasis in art education and literature programs that blend the cognitive and the disciplinary. It can also deal with aesthetic value issues and honor an established psychological tradition. This approach establishes literature as an art form and considers it a subject for serious school study dealing with aesthetic understandings. It presumes that aesthetic development requires significant exposure to and interaction with literary works of art. It offers some general explanations and predictions of what to expect from children at different levels in their critical study of literature, and it offers guidelines for identifying aspects of literature that are important for children to consider and discuss.

This approach suggests that we might gain a new way of understanding how students interpret aesthetic concepts about literature and what kind of cognitive problems they have with them. It suggests that whatever teaching techniques one uses to teach the critical thinking of literature as an art would encourage the students to become conscious of their responses to the literature they read and to use specific criteria in their evaluation of the quality of these literary selections. Improvement in students' grasp of what is aesthetically important in literary works of art might well be more aptly assessed than it has been up to this point in time and is certainly worthy of further study.

"Back to Basics" and Testing

One must acknowledge the educational reform movement that began the 1970s and blossomed in the 1980s. This reform is reflected in the "back-to-basics" movement, an emphasis on the academics and content for all subject disciplines, the demand for accountability of school personnel to the taxpayers, and the

allotment of federal and state government funds for all populations in the schools rather than specific groups such as educationally disadvantaged, remedial, handicapped, minorities, and so on. Elements of this educational reform movement are reflected in the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) of American school children, ages 9, 13, and 17. Created in 1969, the NAEP was mandated by the U.S. Congress to obtain comprehensive and dependable data by conducting national surveys of achievement and knowledge of American students in the elementary and secondary schools. The subject areas assessed include reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies as well as citizenship, computer understanding, art, and music. The Education Commission managed the project for the first 14 years; in 1983, the Educational Testing Service assumed the responsibility for administering the project. It is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and the Center for Education Statistics.

A number of interesting documents analyzing data pertaining to reading and literature have been written and published periodically since the NAEP was initiated in 1969. The following are particularly applicable to the topic under consideration:

- Reading, Thinking, and Writing: Results From the 1970-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1981a)

- Three National Assessments of Reading: Changes in Performance, 1970-1980 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1981b)

- Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1984)

- The Reading Report Card: Progress Toward Excellence in Our Schools--Trends in Reading Over Four National Assessments, 1971-1984 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1985)

- Learning to Be Literate in America: Reading, Writing and Reasoning (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1987)

-Who Reads Best? Factors Related to Reading Achievement in Grades 3, 7, and 11 (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1988)

In each case the authors of these documents called (directly or indirectly) for a restructuring of reading instruction to ensure that students learn comprehension and critical thinking strategies more effectively than they do presently. Applebee, Langer, and Mullis (1988), pointed out that researchers and practitioners have acknowledged the link between higher order thinking and writing. They said that teachers should help students use writing to improve their ability to analyze, interpret, and evaluate what they have read, for both reading and writing call upon similar kinds of knowledge and strategies. Furthermore, writing has the potential to foster deeper and more effective critical thinking about what the student has read.

A discussion (albeit brief) about aspects of literature that were considered in the National Assessments is appropriate here. In an attempt to determine the extent to which and how students at different grade levels develop an appropriate array of reading comprehension strategies, the students were asked (in the 1986 assessment only) to state in writing what they thought about in terms of the following components of literature when they read. (Bear in mind that these components of literature were not to be evaluated in terms of the skill or effectiveness with which an author incorporated them into a story.) The literature components included in the 1986 assessment of reading, rather than literature per se, were the unfolding of plot, setting, and characters, relation of story to self, construction of story, and one's reaction to the story.

The items that were used in the 1986 literature assessment were based on literature samples drawn from a wide range of sources including the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, Shakespeare, Black Literature, and American and English literary classics. Most of the items asked for responses that reflected

knowledge about very specific aspects of an author or a literary selection. Very few items focused on the components or elements of fiction or poetry, or characteristics that differentiated one literary genre from another. Nor did any items require the use of critical thinking skills in relation to the quality of writing or response to the themes of literary selections. It is not impossible to construct test items calling for the application of critical thinking skills in relation to literature as an art form or as one of the humanities; indeed, it is challenging and mind stretching, but not impossible. To attest to this, one might cite The National Council of Teachers of English Cooperative Test of Critical Reading and Appreciation (1968). Children's literature experts and a representative of the Educational Testing Service were involved in the construction and standardization of forms A, B, and C of this test. So, it can be done. There seems little or no justification for the kinds of items that were used in the NAEP to assess children's knowledge and higher order thinking responses to literature.

The types of questions, indeed, the very focus of the items in the literature assessment reflect the perspective held by the advocates of the "back-to-basics" movement and expressed in E.D. Hirsch, Jr's Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know (1987), and Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind (1987). Bloom and Hirsch vary in the reasons for the critical study of classics and/or the study of the profound ideas put forth in the Great Books rather than the use of popular literature and concern for personal/individual response in the study of literature. Hirsch argues that certain literary works serve a socially enabling function; they should be read because they provide students with a common vocabulary and ethical lore and a culturally shared reference point from which values, attitudes, and beliefs can be studied. Bloom emphasized that certain ideas explored and exemplified in books

should be the basis for the literature selected to provide the core of our cultural heritage. Hirsch emphasized that specific titles were needed to provide the core of our cultural heritage. The books by Hirsch and Bloom provided (and continue to provide) fare for heated debate. The essence of the debate (Tchudi, 1987-1988a, 1987-1988b) is reflected in Stephen Tchudi's charge that this focus on the classics (inherent in Hirsch's definition of cultural literacy and to some extent in Bloom's, since they are really quite comparable) amounts to "a form of cultural indoctrination rather than genuine education" (Tchudi, 1987-1988b, p. 72).

Current Thought and Research on Teaching Critical Thinking in the Study of Literature

Although the teaching of critical thinking in the study of literature by children has been alluded to throughout the discussion about the factors that influenced the literature curriculum over the years, it seems that it should be examined more directly, if only to justify the teaching of critical thinking and to clarify the relationship of critical thinking and the study of literature. Rationality or higher order thinking (such as critical thinking) is a means as well as an end (Educational Policies Commission, 1961). Yet most of the scholarly discussions and justification for engaging in research about teaching critical thinking and other kinds of higher order thinking tend to focus on them as means to obtain other goals.

Critical Thinking as a Primary Requirement of Education

Many educators--as well as many social and political leaders--consider teaching children to think critically about what they hear, see, or read a primary requirement of education, that it is the purpose which runs through and strengthens all other educational purposes (Educational Policies Commission, 1961). More specific purposes for teaching critical thinking are espoused by

its advocates. One is related to the concern for the preservation of the democratic way of life. The other is related to the belief that the ability to engage in critical thinking helps one in the solutions of life's problems and in the pursuit of happiness. The omnipresence of the mass media and the glibness with which mind-shaping and opposing ideas are presented in it make it necessary for citizens to evaluate critically these ideas with which they are confronted daily in the mass media.

Modern technology (be it television, cybernetics, or computer-oriented industries) requires persons who can make critical judgments, who can weave their way through novel environments, and who are quick to spot new relationships in the rapidly changing reality (Toffler, 1970). In addition, according to research reports issued by the Creative Education Foundation of the University of Buffalo, as one gains facility in critical thinking skills there also occur significant gains in personality traits such as confidence, self-reliance, persuasiveness, initiative and leadership potential (Parnes, 1962). Recent work by philosophers of education emphasize that critical thinking is an indispensable part of education not just another educational option. The ability to think critically is a necessary condition for being educated. Furthermore, it is the only way to satisfy the moral injunction of respect for individuals (McPeak, 1981; Siegel, 1980).

Critical thinking is a high level intellectual process. It involves aspects of problem solving and creative thinking but goes beyond its relationship to them. In order to carry out critical thinking the individual must inspect, compare, and contrast the relevant facts or opinions, then arrive at a conclusion, making a judgment about the relevant facts or opinions being appraised. It also involves some measure of belief and other affective factors. Most children are not likely to learn to think critically by themselves; they tend to need help in becoming critical thinkers (Russell, 1956).

In general, critical thinking has been found to be relatively independent of general intelligence and knowledge of subject matter. Yet it is readily understood that a reasonable amount of intelligence and knowledge of subject must be considered essentials for the process of critical thinking. Of considerable importance are two other essentials to the process of critical thinking, namely, the command of the techniques of evaluation and the willingness to be objective. It is through example, reminder, direct teaching, or techniques of evaluation and systematic instructional guidance (Glaser, 1941) that the acquisition of both of these essentials is facilitated.

Critical Reading

Critical reading is the application of critical thinking skills to the act of reading. Critical reading is an analytical, evaluative level of reading in which the reader analyzes and judges both the content and the effectiveness of the manner in which the material is presented. Critical reading can be applied to argumentative, informational, and literary material. In this paper, the focus is on the critical thinking (or the critical reading) of literary material, although it is recognized that, in some instances, argumentative and informational material will also be used when analyzing and evaluating specific aspects of literary selections.

Little substantive research has focused on what materials would be effective for elementary school teachers to use in teaching critical thinking. A review of the related research revealed a small number of studies in which children's literature in trade books was used to teach critical reading. In these studies literature was found to be a viable means for providing comprehension and critical reading instruction. Findings indicate that instruction in critical reading skills will in some cases promote growth in general reading achievement. (Andersen, 1984; Boodt, 1978; Bosma, 1981; Cohen, 1968; Uydi,

1974; Wolf, King, & Huck, 1967). The Wolf, King, and Huck study is by far the most significant investigation in this area. An experimental study was conducted over one school year in grades one through six in a self-contained classroom. The experimental group received direct instruction in critical reading through the use of children's literature in trade books while the control group read the trade books but did not receive instruction in critical reading.

These studies on teaching critical thinking (about reading literary selections) mentioned above were based primarily on Bloom's taxonomy and the notion that one need only learn to ask and answer higher order questions to foster critical thinking. Questioning strategies are only one important component of a larger umbrella of skills. Bloom's taxonomy places no value on one level of cognition over another; it is a neutral instrument. Critical thinking, however, presupposes that analysis and evaluation are central and crucial to its purpose (Paul, 1985).

Recent studies have shown that in addition to these cognitive skills (those used directly in carrying out some task), critical thinking must be turned upon itself, that is, one must think critically about one's own thinking (Paul, 1985; Sloan, 1984). Thus critical thinking involves the use of metacognitive skills (such as planning, monitoring, and revising one's progress of critical thinking about literature). Research demonstrates that sound use of metacognitive skills marks an important difference between proficient or unsuccessful readers (comprehension) and thinkers (Brown, 1978). Applebee, Langer and Mullis (1988) also cited the importance of using metacognitively oriented activities in developing critical thinking skills in the teaching of reading.

Critical thinking can be taught. There seems to be little or no challenge to the idea that children of elementary school age (Grades K-8 or ages 5-13) have the potential capacity and indeed can be taught to engage in higher level thinking--critical thinking--when listening or reading. In fact, a substantial

amount of research over the years demonstrates clearly that elementary school-aged children can engage in varied aspects of critical thinking. (See Arons, 1985; Beyer, 1985; Chamberlain & Burrough, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978; Wolf & Ellinger, 1966; Wolf, Huck, & King, 1967). Few educators and critics of the schools would deny that it is the responsibility of the schools to teach children how to think critically and recently more educators are recommending teaching critical thinking through the use of children's literature.

Questions are often raised about the developmental argument about young children's capabilities of abstract thought before the Piagetian stages of formal operations. In response to this one must point out that the Piagetian stages of thought are based on a conception of cognition that is not really hospitable to the arts. It assumes that there is only the cognitive domain, namely empirical scientific knowledge, and that development in understanding of art and critical thinking about art must be a kind of application of Piaget's findings. This stance is unduly limiting, for it does not allow one to get close to what is aesthetic about aesthetic response to literature or any other kind of art, nor does it allow for questions of aesthetic value (Parsons, 1986).

What students <u>should</u> do and what they <u>can</u> do with regard to thinking critically when listening or reading (especially the critical reading of literature) seems to have little relation to what they <u>are</u> doing. In the main, our schools have not become places where critical thinking is constant and relevant. Frank Smith (1984) emphasized that "The situation is dramatic--in fact, it is a cliffhanger--but the realization may be dawning why education is not working as it should" (p. 13). People just are not thinking enough in schools; critical thinking is currently submerged in teachers and students alike.

The results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported in <u>The Reading Report Card: Progress Toward Excellence in Our Schools--Trends in</u>

Reading Over Four Assessments, 1971-1984 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1985) and in Who Reads Best? Factors Related to Reading Achievement in Grades 3, 7, and 11. Applebee, Langer, and Mullis (1988) demonstrate that students (9 through 17 years of age in the United States) lack proficiency in these higher level thinking skills (as shown in the reading assessment, not in the literature assessment). More specifically, trends in the results of national assessments of students within this age range over a period of 15 years (1971- 1986) demonstrate that improvement is needed in all kinds of thinking, but especially in higher order thinking. Proficiency in critical thinking skills is not among the typical accomplishments achieved by students enrolled in our schools at any level, be it at the elementary, secondary, or college level. Although the ability to read thoughtfully has been a continuing goal of reading instruction, a series of studies indicated that students of all ages are seldom thoughtfully engaged by what they read (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1988). This "series" of studies include The Reading Report Card: Progress Toward Excellence in Our Schools--Trends in Reading Over Four National Assessments, 1971-1984 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1985); High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America (Boyer, 1983); A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Teacher development needed. A number of researchers have demonstrated that critical thinking is a psychological process that is a learned behavior. That behavior must be encouraged repeatedly and taught by example and through direct instruction many times over in the context of varied listening and reading activities done by students in school (Glaser, 1941; Hullfish & Smith, 1961; Russell, 1956; Wolf et al., 1967). Only recently have the advocates of the teaching of critical thinking emphasized that teachers should have a solid foundation in critical thinking skills if they are expected to teach them.

Unfortunately, there is considerable evidence (based on anecdotal evidence and systematic research--standardized test performance and psychological research studies) to indicate that children and adults (including teachers) do not perform well on the kinds of tasks that are used to indicate critical thinking competence. Well-planned and realistic curricula designed to foster critical thinking skills, abilities, and dispositions cannot be achieved without the development of critical thinking on the part of the teacher (Paul, 1985). Successful critical thinking instruction requires that teachers recognize that critical thinking focuses on process but is also product-oriented. It is a process that brings comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation into every act of the mind that involves the acceptance of beliefs or claims to truth. It thereby fosters habits of rational thought and rational learning (Paul, 1985).

Using Literature for Critical Reading

There are some important advantages and some disadvantages and challenges for using the literature in trade books (also known as library books or real books) rather than selections from textbooks or literature anthologies as the primary resources for teaching critical reading of literature. The findings of a number of research studies (Blatt, 1986; Bosma, 1981; Chambers, 1969; Spencer, 1986) point to some of these important advantages, disadvantages, or challenges. A significant number of pupils who learned to read through the use of basal readers had little or no inclination to read except that which was required of them and a goodly number refused to read even what was required. These researchers noted that what makes students enthusiastic readers is that they can associate the process of learning to read with what provides them with a feeling of satisfaction or pleasure, because what they read has some significance to them, allowing them not only something to which they can relate but offering them something of substance to think and feel strongly about. In

addition, these researchers noted that the unenthusiastic readers had no legacy of past satisfactions in what they read or had read to them. These same results were revealed in the latest NAEP report (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1988).

Each of these researchers emphasized that one implication of their findings is that if one is going to help the student establish a legacy of pleasure and satisfaction that they can associate directly to reading episodes, and if one wants to make students more receptive to lessons designed to teach specific reading skills or concepts, one must implement a reading program based not on the reading of books but on the reading of literature. There is a considerable difference between the two: A book is a commodity; it consists of made-for-school text usually with controlled vocabulary, sentence structure, and has narrative types and format as well as in topics addressed. The stories in textbooks usually contain fewer plot complications, involve less conflict among and within characters, and offer less insight into characters' goals, motives, and feelings (Bruce, 1984).

In contrast, literature is a form of art. As a form of art literature must be written without obvious controls on language or on the elements of style. It is literature that is frequently published as trade books (library books) and it is literature that will be used to teach critical thinking skills. In literature trade books there is great diversity in topics dealt with as well as a wide range of believable personalities depicted. The controls in the literature found in trade books are those established by the reader's own level of maturity, ability to understand, and previous experiences with literature, together with the extent of the author's talents and imaginative powers, as well as the reader's own sense of social conscience and propriety. This literature offers words and pictures that release images, ideas, and emotions within readers. It provides readers an opportunity to encounter cause

and effect relationships, chronology, comparison and contrast, and other factors that are inherent in critical thinking.

There are some problems in teaching young people to read critically through children's literature in trade books: Getting the right kind, variety and number of selections into the classroom (from sources such as the school or public libraries) and keeping the classroom collection fluid call for close cooperation with the librarians as well as a knowledge of children's literature by teachers. Helping children learn the techniques relating to self-selection and to independence of thought and action is no small challenge. Teachers must feel the need and have a readiness for this approach to teaching critical reading. This means that the teachers themselves must be critical readers of literature and must be knowledgeable about and appreciative of the values of critical thinking in general and the critical reading of literature in particular.

What one chooses to bring into critical discussions about a literary work of art affects how the work is understood and appreciated. Although a method of literary criticism may solve the problem of how one might explore the expressive properties of a literary work of art, it cannot provide for the variations among its reading audience. Nor do methods generally deal with the question of a literary selection's suitability for criticism.

Four principles for critical evaluation. Listed below are four basic principles can be assigned to the critical evaluation of literary works of art.

1. "A concept of literary art must determine the suitability of a literary selection or criticism" (Lankford, 1986, p. 60). This is seldom a problem with traditional forms of literary selections, but it does become an issue when iconoclastic literary selections appear--as they did for both adults and children in the late 1960s and 1970s. Whatever definition of art one subscribes to must accommodate the critical evaluation of literature that constitutes a departure from commonly recognized literary forms.

2. "A commitment to relevant elements of a literary piece is necessary for effective literary criticism" (Lankford, 1986, p. 61). These relevant

elements include directives for perception (such as the work as a whole rather than consideration of only one of its components) and restraints (i.e., judgment is considered sound and valid only when it is based on adequate reasons rather than a simple statement of preference). Furthermore, in terms of restraints, the approach to critical evaluation must be on the basis of intrinsic criticism or contextual criticism (Stolnitz, 1966). Intrinsic criticism has as its focus the properties and qualities of the literary work of art itself. In this approach to literary criticism, one identifies the literary elements or components and their relationships and appraises how they affect our response and how they contribute to meanings conveyed. Contextual criticism leads the reader of the literary work of art into areas of social and artistic origin and influence (i.e., the cultural milieu and environment surrounding the creation of the work, biographical circumstances of the author, and the apparent character of the literary selection in relation to the history of literature.) Very few, if any, scholars in the teaching of literature would consider using the contextual criticism approach to literary with elementary school children.

3. "Goals of literary criticism must be established if children are to learn to engage in critical thinking with clarity and to maximum advantage in their study of literature" (Lankford, 1986, p. 62). Knowledge of one's reason, purpose, or goal for engaging in this approach to the critical study of literature acts as motivation and ultimately results in a sense of closure and feeling of accomplishment.

4. "Characteristics of the students should be ascertained prior to evaluating them in their critical thinking competencies in the study of literature" (Lankford, 1986, p. 63). Variables would include the language used in relation to the literary selections, levels and kinds of experiences with literature, and knowledge and aptitude relative to the study of literature should be considered.

Three kinds of writing. With the recent resurgence in teaching writing, one finds there are three basic kinds of writing related to the study of literature: (a) imitative writing, (b) noncritical writing for which ideas or literary elements in a selection serve as springboards, and (c) interpretative and critical writing.

Literature is often being used as a model for aspects of writing (labeled by some as imitative writing)--children pattern their writing after the structure and form of a genre or an author's style or syntactic techniques. The value of imitative writing to literary study long has been debated and still is not clear. Evidence that imitative writing contributes to greater ability to read literature is wanting. In addition, there is strong evidence that

understanding text structure or schemata brought about by a hearty degree of exposure to a particular kind of literature and some direct instruction about its characteristics and components (rather than imitation) will improve both comprehension of the text and writing in that genre (Dressel, 1986).

Writing that stems from the ideas in a work is common in the elementary classrooms, but writing triggered by literary elements much less so. In the first type, literature serves as motivation or the provided topics for the writing activity and furnishes preparation. In the second, writing activities are designed to clarify or reinforce understanding of literary structure and technique (the student is asked to describe a scene or event or relate an incident which is comparable): In so doing, the student's understanding of the structure and technique is reinforced and the teacher is able to assess the student's level of understanding about aspects of the literature under study (Burton, 1968).

Consistent with the use of writing to learn and think there is considerable interest in helping students learn to think at the inferential and critical levels about texts and ideas in texts through writing. In a report about the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Applebee, Langer, and Mullis (1988) suggested that effective comprehension activities would build upon students' initial interpretations by using writing or discussion activities which confront readers with alternative views, thereby stimulating progress toward a fuller understanding and/or reinterpretation where necessary. This same report suggests that such approaches are rarely used in American schools. When and if this kind of writing is used in literature study at the elementary school level, if the literary selections are of interest to the children and the questions pertaining to the literary selections are worded so they can be understood by the children and do indeed call for critical thinking, one will find the following aspects of literature focused on:

> analysis of characters' actions; discussion of character development in a work; interpretation of specific passages, events, or symbols; comparison of works on specific points; discussion of thematic development in a work; criticism of specific techniques; and support or refutation of a generalization about a work. (Burton, 1968, p. 71)

In their discussions of the 1986 NAEP results in reading and literature, Applebee, Langer, and Mullis (1987, 1988) continue to emphasize that writing should be used to help students bring deeper meaning to their interpretation of the text. Writing has the potential to foster deeper and more critical thinking about what a student has read. When students are asked to analyze, interpret, or evaluate what they have read (and do so in writing), they must not only reason effectively, but must also communicate their ideas in ways that others can understand. This sort of critical thinking is often perceived to be at the heart of an academic education. Teachers are being encouraged to make use of frames or scaffolds to help the reader to organize information gleaned from the text in order to extend and explore meanings (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Bruner, 1978; Cazden, 1980). Student performance improves significantly if these strategies encourage metacognitive awareness (Raphael & Wonnacott, 1981).

Literature Programs

College Children's Literature Textbooks

Most college children's literature textbooks (written for use in courses for preservice and inservice elementary and middle school teachers and school librarians) have long contained a chapter or two discussing aspects of the literature curriculum. For years local school districts have distributed guidebooks for implementing literature programs. Only recently did state departments of education issue publications specifying how to plan an effective literature program in the elementary grades. Nor until the past year were there

commercially published comprehensive literature programs for the elementary school, grades kindergarten or one through six or eight. A detailed content analysis of each of these sources for planning and implementing literature programs in the elementary school has yet to be completed; however, a careful, albeit cursory, examination of them has already revealed some of their important characteristics. These are discussed below.

The authors of the college children's literature textbooks used widely throughout the United States in courses in teacher education and school librarianship suggest goals for an elementary school literature program and, in some instances, they state that prerequisite experiences are needed before one should work for one on another goal. Typically, the authors of these college textbooks urge that the literature programs in the elementary school should enable students to enjoy literature; understand their literary heritage; understand the formal elements of literature; recognize, appreciate, and prefer quality literature; understand themselves and others; extend their background of experiences; and evaluate what they read.

The authors of one college children's literature textbook offer a guide for book selection that is based on ages and stages of child development (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987). They provide a table consisting of a list of the developmental stages of children ages 3 through 12; the implications of these stages for developing certain skills, concepts, and attitudes about literature when using children's literature; and then, specific titles of literary selections that would help to foster the acquisition of these skills, concepts, and attitudes. The readers are asked to keep in mind that each child has a unique pattern of growth and might well meet these stages before or after their agemates; thus, they should follow this guide with caution.

Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1987) suggest specific activities that would help students to achieve these goals, but they are short on suggesting a

detailed and specific scope and sequence of knowledge, skills, and attitudes about many varied aspects of literature for each grade level or age range. They do remind their readers that prerequisite learning and children's literary background should be determined before offering the specific activities described. They recommend informal measures to determine readiness for these activities, that is, periodic examination of (a) record keeping devices such as work folders, reading records, students, journals, interviews, and (b) analysis of children's discussions and the products they created in manipulative activities to determine their understanding, attitudes, and knowledge about literature. They urge the teachers to keep track of their observations of children's responses as reflected in the activities discussed above and analyze them periodically. There is little or no discussion in these textbooks about the place of standardized assessment and/or evaluation instruments in literature.

The types of activities suggested for the study of literature generally include fiction, poetry, and informational books and are based on a single book, books by one author or illustrator, a literary genre, or a focus unit based on content or theme. The organizational plans suggested for these activities are those reflecting some kind of connections (linkages or webbing techniques) that are based on a central focus or theme cutting across curriculum subject areas (language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, art, and music.) The activities recommended for use with children reflect the stance that knowledge is derived from action. When applying this theory of learning to children's understanding of literature, the authors recommend that, in their efforts to promote the children's understanding about literature, the teachers should provide activities which allow for manipulation of concrete materials "just like they do when teaching mathematics" (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987, p. 678). Thus, teachers intending to extend children's understanding of literature are advised

to offer activities which express and clarify children's understandings about and responses to literature: (a) art activities such as murals, dioramas, felt-boards, making slides and filmstrips, examining artifacts, creating maps and timelines, creating pictures using the same media used by the book illustrators; (b) writing activities, based on using literature as a model, such as imitating authors' styles, plot structure, and use of literary devices or writing an original story in a specific genre or format; and (c) other activities such as crafts, cooking, and games.

Examples of questioning techniques are based on levels of thinking reflected in Bloom's (1974) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. They are offered as suggestions for evoking a variety of children's responses to literature. The examples of questions range from memory to evaluation. Emphasizing the values of literature for all children, Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1987) take the position that there is no one literary selection for every child. They list titles that are highly recommended because of their literary quality or uniqueness and/or significance of theme or style that would be "beneficial" to or likely to be enjoyed by but they do not provide a basic or standard list of literary selections for all children. The authors of the most widely used college children's literature textbooks describe the different plans for literature programs. They remind their readers that each plan must reflect more than the teaching of literature. It should reflect the philosophy of the school system, the beliefs about children's learning and about the teaching of reading and literature. The variations include a separate literature program, integrating literature with a basal reading program, and a literature-based reading program.

State Departments of Education. In 1983 the California legislature mandated educational reform agenda to provide a rich and rigorous curriculum in science, history, literature, and the arts in an attempt to turn around the

trend in widespread illiteracy by challenging and inspiring students while imparting the foundation skills of listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Subsequently, the California State Department of Education authorized the Language Arts and Foreign Language Unit of the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Division to prepare a statement of recommendations for planning and implementing a literature-based curriculum (K-12). Members of the Language Arts and Foreign Language Unit, with the help of teachers, administrators, curriculum planners, and librarians from areas throughout California, prepared guides for implementing The Literature Initiative. Two very important publications prepared by the Literature Committee are Recommended Readings in Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Eight (California State Department of Education, 1986) and the Handbook for Planning an Effective Literature Program, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (California State Department of Education, 1987). The contents of both of these publications will be discussed briefly below.

The 1,010 titles listed in the publication Recommended Readings in Literature: Kindergarten Through Grade Eight, represent classics as well as contemporary works of fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction. Most of the selections listed are in English, but also included are some titles of literary pieces in foreign languages. The list is divided into three sections: Core Materials, Extended Materials, and Recreational-Motivational Materials. The Core Materials include lists of works of literary merit from all genres and represent a sampling of our literary heritage in a systematic program which is articulated at all grade levels. The literary selections are to be given intensive attention on a classwide basis by close reading or reading aloud in part or whole or seeing them performed on stage or as a film production. It is intended that literary selections serve as motivators for classroom discussion and students' writing.

The Extended Materials consist of works that students read on their own or in small groups to supplement classroom work carried on under the core program. These selections allow for special interests, needs, and abilities of students. This list provides students with possibilities for comparing books on the core list with their own choice of books in terms of themes, settings, characterization, and styles used by the authors and illustrators. The Recreational-Motivational Materials focus on high-quality literary works that are included in the libraries in the students' homes, classrooms, and community and which students can select to read individually during their free time. Literature included in this list may include works of special appeal to individual readers as well as works of universal appeal to all students. It is expected that teachers and librarians will coordinate their individual reading programs to ensure the accessibility and the most effective use of the works in this list (California State Department of Education, 1986).

Three major goals are emphasized in teaching literature in California's literature program. They are for children (a) to discover the pleasure and illumination that a fine piece of literature offers; (b) to become lifelong readers of literature; and (c) to experience vicariously the lives of others, different time periods, places, value systems, and the many cultures of the World (California State Department of Education, 1986). Teachers are advised, when designing lessons around the major literary works (listed in the Core materials), to include activities suitable for use at three stages of study--before, during, and after the reading. Prereading activities should arouse student curiosity about the upcoming selection and fill in the necessary background (about the author, time period during which the action occurs, or any specialized vocabulary). Activities during the reading should question students in a manner that will promote comprehension, cause students to compare responses,

and alert children to graceful and effective uses of language. After a reading assignment, the classroom activities should focus on and deepen the students' responses to the text and encourage long-term interest in literature--especially by making connections between a text and real life and using literature as a model for creative writing activities (California State Department of Education, 1987).

In the Handbook for Planning an Effective Literature Program, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (California State Department of Education, 1987), teachers are reminded that literature is an art form, thus it is fundamentally different from teaching other academic subjects. As such, the literary selection makes a direct claim on the emotions and imagination of the reader. The implications of this are that the teacher's role is to deepen, enrich, and clarify the quality of the students' responses and that assessment of student achievement should be done through subjective modes rather than objective testing. "If higher goals of a response-based literature program and the attendant development by students if higher-level thinking skills are to be realized, then subjective evaluation of student progress should predominate" (pp. 32-33).

The State of Michigan Department of Education's Department of Reading Instruction established a Literature Committee in Fall 1988. The committee's charge was to define the parameters and components of a literature program, kindergarten through Grade 12. There is one basic difference between the authority base and purpose for the planning and subsequent publications about literature programs that are prepared by each of the departments of education of California and Michigan: In California, implementation of the literature program defined by the California State Department of Education (Language Arts and Foreign Languages Unit, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Division) is not optional. It is intended to replace commercially sponsored literature

programs. In Michigan, the program is intended to serve as a guide for whatever resources upon which the individual schools and/or school systems choose to base their literature programs.

Commercial Literature Programs

Until very recently, 1987, comprehensive literature programs were not published by commercial publishing companies. Within the past year literature programs have been published by Houghton Mifflin Publishing; Holt, Rinehart and Winston; Scholastic; McDougal-Little; and Open Court. All these programs claim to go hand-in-hand with any reading program, as independent reading or as directed activities for small groups. All programs include lists of trade books (library books) that cover all literary genres for kindergarten through Grade 6, 8, or 12, ranging from the classics and contemporary literary selections in their original form. Some of the commercial literature programs include sets of books; in others, they simply list the titles of the books and assume that the users will get these books from their library collections or order them directly from the publishers or from jobbers. The materials that are identified in these commercial programs are varied but, in the main, they include lists of the literary selections (or the actual books), materials that would heighten understanding and motivation such as audio cassettes or videos and posters; journals in which students can record their responses to the literature; sheets suggesting follow-up creative activities; folders to accumulate the follow-up activities that allow for such storage; and, as would be expected, the teacher's manual (consisting of background information about theoretical background, objectives/goals, as well as basic and supplementary activities, resources, etc.).

Summary and Conclusions

One can see quite clearly how various factors have influenced English education (specifically the literature curriculum) in the elementary school over the years and have influenced the approaches to literature that are most commonly used in the elementary schools currently. It is obvious that the emphasis in the literature program at all grade levels in the elementary school (K-6) is to use literature as a vehicle for enjoyment, entertainment, and recreation. In addition, literature is used to accomplish patriotic, character-development, and moralistic ends, for purposes of bibliotherapy or personal adjustment, to learn other content such as history, science, or to learn reading skills such as comprehension or phonics and structural analysis for decoding the printed word. Occasionally one will find a literature curriculum built around themes like survival, children as victims of war or the immigrant experience (Applebee, 1974; Schmidt et al., 1985; Sloan, 1984). There is some interest in using literature, especially the classics, to provide students with a sense of cultural wholeness and/or historical continuity (Ravitch, 1985a, 1985b) or to serve as a means for becoming culturally literate (Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1987). Approaches to the study of literature for students from the elementary school through the university level are diverse and often contradictory but all draw to some extent on current reading comprehension research, literary theory, cognitive processing theory, social psychology, and/or discourse pragmatics.

Current language arts theory stresses the need to help students learn to express their responses to literature, and when doing so, to go beyond initial superficial responses, that is, to explore and reflect evaluatively upon their responses. Rather than function simply as a means to communicate ideas, the act of writing, especially in response to open-ended questions, fosters reflection, concentration, extension, or organization of thought (Marshall, 1987).

The role of the teacher is defined not only as a facilitator of responses through discussions and writing, but also as someone who teaches various influence strategies or heuristics for helping students explore their responses. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are combined around the need to understand the social meaning of discourse and in this case, the discourse would focus on one's critical evaluations of some aspects of one or more literary selections. To carry out this discourse students would be asked to share their critical evaluations of aspects of the literary selections. To define these social meanings readers are asked to bring their background knowledge of social and literary prototypes and conventions to the text. In this approach to the study of literature, the traditional components of fiction (character, setting, plot, theme, etc.), are critically examined in terms of the elements of text/genre as are context/situation, characters' knowledge, beliefs, needs, desires, plans, and goals, plot structures, and ideas/themes in terms of the specific thought processes involved in inferring these elements (Sloan, 1984).

Northrop Frye's (1964a) approach to the study of literature, namely criticism or critical thinking about aspects of literature (especially its structure and form as art, not his insistence that poetry be at the center of all literary study and that prose be peripheral to all literary study), is given considerable attention in current discussions about critical theory. The critical reading of literature can be used for more than illuminating particular works or providing theoretical constructs for literary interpretations. It can further education in a more fundamental sense by providing contexts in which taste, values, emotions, and facts are interrelated with critical thinking and evaluation (Sloan, 1984). Unfortunately, the critical thinking about literature seldom happens in literary classrooms--at the elementary school, middle school, or secondary school levels (Schmidt et al, 1985; Tanner, 1986).

When literature is viewed as an art it is understood in its truest sense; that is, engaging in critical thinking when interpreting and evaluating (Bate, 1982; Cianciolo, 1982; Frye, 1964a, 1964b). From this perspective, literature by definition (as an art) does not permit analysis without synthesis, description without evaluation, or abstractions without feeling.

Leading scholars in the study of literature have demonstrated that literary study can and should be taught in the elementary school (Blatt, 1986; Bogdan; 1986; Cianciolo, 1982; Dillon, 1979; Dressel, 1986; Frye, 1964b; Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987; Ingarden, 1968/1973a, 1965/1973b; Norton, 1987; Parsons, 1986; Probst, 1984, 1986; Rosenblatt, 1968, 1986; Scholes, 1974; Sloan, 1984). As a result of their research and deliberations, these scholars have delineated the following intellectually dependable, challenging, and comprehensive principles focus which are listed below.

- Literature is an art. It is an art made of words (in the case of a picture book, an art made of words and pictures). Like any other form of art, genuine literature, although it may enlighten the reader, does not preach or teach. Whatever image of reality or aspect of the human condition is depicted in a novel, picture book, poem, or drama is an illusion of that reality. The image cannot be a mere mirroring of any aspect of life if it is truly a work of art. Artistic excellence is never identical with photographic accuracy, with a minor reflection of the realities of the human condition. In creating a work of literary art the writer or the book illustrator uses literary or artistic components and techniques with conscious skill and creative imagination to create images that amount to a selective interpretation of the reality. The result of this selective interpretation is an illusion rather than a miniature of the reality that is depicted in or associated with the story. The illusionary image must be thoroughly identifiable and believable yet it must not be exactly like life. Certainly one will see in aspects of the plot, characters, and situation in a story an elusive magic of transformation or representation of reality. If some degree of reality were missing, we would have complete abstraction and no story, no meaning.

- The purpose of art is to evoke affective response. Since the affective response is very sensitive and vulnerable to destruction, it must be considered primary and the cognitive response seen--not as secondary, but as supportive or enlarging.

- As an artistic entity literature is writing that is valued on the basis of its beauty of form, its emotional and imaginative power. When reading and responding to the printed word one must make a distinction between the imaginative verbal constructs that comprise a literary work

and the passages of factual discourse found in an essay. One must learn, when reading a story, picture book, poem or novel, to react to the total structure of the work.

- Literature is one of the humanities. When it is viewed as such, one tends to read a literary selection to find out how the author interprets people's responses to certain social issues or to aspects of the human condition. It is used as a source through which one gains an understanding of oneself and one's relationship to other people and things. It is used to find out what an author offers the reader in relation to the perpetual and universal human questions common to people of all ages: Why am I like I am? Who am I? What is my world?. This approach to literature is justified if one remembers that literature as an art form should not be read on the literal level for actual or even partial answers to these persistent human concerns, nor should it be read as a source for factual information. No attempt should be made to read into these stories or poems or even to judge them in terms of external standards, such as truth, as though they were factual or informational writing.

- The subject of literature is aspects of the human condition, human experience, everything which has to do with people--their actions, their needs and desires, their strengths and frailties, their response to the world in which they live.

- Aesthetic response to literature cannot be directly taught or learned, for it is primarily an affective response than can be experienced by the reader and the reader alone. It is shaped by an individual's own private and personal reaction to it. Teachers can and should teach students how to read a literary work critically and with sensitivity. Teachers and librarians can and should offer children numerous and varied strategies for responding to literature as an entity and to the interrelationship and interdependence of the components of literature. These responses should permit the reader to use a number of inference strategies: engaging, connecting, describing, explaining/interpreting, and judging the literary work as a coherent whole. Whatever background knowledge the teacher has (facts about the author, the era in which the selection was written or in which the action occurs, literary tradition or innovation it reflects, its form or structure etc.) should be freely drawn on when guiding the study of literature. This helps the reader to understand and appreciate more fully its effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness) as a literary work of art. All learners, ranging from the slow to the gifted, will profit from the enjoyment and imaginative thinking that literature provides, responding to it, and from learning about it as an art. (The ability to decode or read fluently is not a prerequisite to one's ability to experience a story or poem. All one need do is to listen to the selection being read.) Sound literary insight and techniques for evaluating a literary selection cannot be taught by the teacher imposing notions of what the work means. Children can be taught to be self-critical and by engaging in critical evaluation of aspects of the literary selection, by careful questioning posed by the student him or her self or by one more learned (the teacher), can learn to recognize and appreciate new more rewarding and more valid aspects of a literary selection.

- The study of literature pertains to the knowledge of what literature is and how it works. Elementary school children are perfectly capable of learning what literature is all about if teachers and librarians use materials and methods appropriate to their level of maturity. The knowledge of what literature is and how it works is acquired by learning about the shape and structure of works of literature through progressive and systematic instruction. This approach will take the students beyond the subjectivity of their experience into a more global and comprehensive view.

- The content of literature should be perceived in terms of the structure and form of the given selections, rather than in relationship to something extraneous to the story. The art form itself carries the meaning; the meaning cannot be understood without the form which transmits it. Whatever is asked about or studied about a story should take the reader back to the story itself to find the answer rather than outside the story and to align the meaning with external things. There are times when we can ask students to read literature and respond to it for its own sake and on its own terms. A caution is in order here: Any such experience depends not only on the work itself, but also on the reader's capacities, readiness and background of experiences with literature in general. This does not, however, negate the fact that response to literature is a personal experience (an inner experience.)

- More often than not, students should select their own titles for the study of literature. Occasionally all students or small groups of students might well be asked to read the same literary selection. In order to operate a literature program in this manner, teachers need to know how to match students' reading interests, abilities, and needs prior to reading experiences with title according to particular authors, genres, topics, or subject matter. They also need to be able to promote books using book talks and displays, peer recommendations, library visits, and group response activities. Teachers need to be able to evaluate students in terms of changes in attitudes, amount of reading, interests, improvement in ability, and performance on guided response assignments, knowledge of what literature is and how it works, ability and willingness to respond.

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